

#41 Resting Heart Rate — Your Free Daily Health Check

The Simplest Early Warning System in the Stable

A fit, healthy horse at complete rest should have a heart rate between **28 and 44 beats per minute**. That number — checked first thing each morning before feeding or exercise — tells you more about what is happening inside the horse than almost anything else you can see from the outside.

As a horse gets aerobically fitter, the resting heart rate tends to **slowly drop**. But here is the more important lesson: when resting HR is **elevated above that horse's individual normal** — even by just 4–6 beats — something is wrong. Illness, insufficient sleep, overtraining, or systemic stress all push resting HR up **before other signs appear**.

KEY POINTS

- Normal resting HR in horses: **28–44 bpm** (varies by individual)
- A **falling resting HR** over weeks = aerobic fitness improving
- An **elevated resting HR** above that horse's norm = early warning signal
- Can indicate: illness onset, overtraining, dehydration, systemic stress, poor sleep
- Check at the **same time each morning** before any activity — consistency is key

THE INDIVIDUAL BASELINE

Every horse has their own resting HR normal. One horse's 38 bpm is another horse's 32 bpm. **You cannot compare horses to each other** — only to their own baseline over time. Establish each horse's normal in the first two weeks of preparation.

WHAT A RISE MEANS

A resting HR elevated by **8 bpm or more** above normal is a red flag: do not gallop that horse today. A rise of **4–6 bpm** warrants watching. A rise of **10+ bpm** usually means the vet should be called.

STABLE QUESTION

"Do you know the resting heart rate of every horse in your stable right now — and would you know if one of them was 8 beats higher than normal this morning?"

TRAINER TAKEAWAY

Resting HR takes 30 seconds to check and costs nothing. Make it the first thing you record each morning. Over time you will build a pattern for every horse — and when something changes, you will see it **before it becomes a problem**.

CONNECTS TO →

Monday #44: HRR shows the engine at work and recovering — together resting HR and HRR bracket the full cardiovascular picture. | **Wednesday #46:** V200 is another non-invasive fitness measure — both should improve together.

#44 Heart Rate Recovery — How Fast Does Your Horse Come Back?

Post-Exercise Recovery Speed — A Powerful Fitness Marker

After a hard gallop, a horse's heart rate shoots up to 200+ beats per minute. How quickly it comes back down tells you — **in real numbers** — how fit the cardiovascular system actually is. This is Heart Rate Recovery (HRR), and it is one of the most reliable fitness signals available to any trainer without a laboratory.

A genuinely fit horse should return to **below 100 bpm within 10–15 minutes** of stopping exercise. If it takes 20–25 minutes, the cardiovascular system is under-developed for the workload being asked. **Slow HRR is one of the earliest detectable signs of overtraining.**

KEY POINTS

- Fit horse benchmark: **below 100 bpm within 10–15 minutes** of stopping exercise
- Slow recovery = cardiovascular system not yet fit for the intensity being used
- Consistently slow HRR across sessions = **overtraining red flag**
- HRR improves with aerobic fitness — track it across the preparation to see the aerobic engine growing
- External factors also slow HRR: **heat, dehydration, illness** — factor these in

MEASURING HRR SIMPLY

Stop the horse after a gallop. Record HR at **5 minutes, 10 minutes, and 15 minutes** post-exercise. Graph these weekly. A fitness improvement shows as the **same effort requiring less recovery time**. The trend line is your fitness curve.

HRR VS RESTING HR

Resting HR tells you the **baseline cardiovascular efficiency**. HRR tells you the **recovery capacity after work**. A fitter horse has both: lower resting HR AND faster post-exercise recovery.

STABLE QUESTION

"After your last gallop set, how long did it take each horse to get below 100 bpm — and did any of them take noticeably longer than they did a month ago?"

TRAINER TAKEAWAY

Heart Rate Recovery is a fitness test you can run every single session without stopping training. Track the minutes-to-100bpm number for each horse. When it drops from 18 minutes to 11 minutes across six weeks, that is **measurable, objective proof the aerobic engine is growing.**

CONNECTS TO →

Monday #41: Resting HR shows the engine at idle. HRR shows the engine at work and recovering — together they bracket the full cardiovascular picture. | **Wednesday #46:** V200 is another non-invasive fitness measure — both should improve together as aerobic fitness grows.